



1.1 Introduction

Environmental impact analysis can require the collection and analysis of a significant amount of demographic and economic data. Therefore, it is appropriate that those conducting the research should have some guidance as to the types of data available and their likely sources. Most impact analysis is an assessment of a future condition and, in order to evaluate the potential impacts of that condition, a good understanding of the existing, or base, condition must be provided. The information presented in this section will help in the preparation of that base.

1.2 Objectives

The principal objective of this section is to acquaint users of this manual with the types of resources available to assist them in socio-economic impact analysis. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of published or unpublished resources, but rather to provide information on several basic resources and where others might be found. A secondary objective is to give the user an understanding of the difference between primary and secondary resources.

1.3 Data sources

1.3.1 Primary Data Sources

Primary data is gathered directly from the public, either in the form of public records or through the use of surveys or polls. Primary data is usually the most timely and reflective of demographic conditions and public attitudes or opinions. However, in the case of public attitudes or opinions, the methods of gathering primary data are also the most expensive to implement and interpret. Because of this, opinion survey techniques should be used with discretion where the need can be justified. Its potential value should be considered when the transportation improvement is of significant size or generates sufficient controversy to warrant the expenditure of time and money required for administering and analyzing an impartial opinion survey.

1.3.2 Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data sources are a compilation of primary data sources. For example, raw census data would be considered primary material while a census report which compiled and summarized that data would be considered secondary. Most printed resources are considered secondary and these will probably make up the great bulk of materials used in any analysis. Examples of these types of materials include printed reports and studies, histories of communities, periodicals, etc.

One example of a secondary source available in all WisDOT Region offices, and most other agencies or consulting firms is, the biennial Wisconsin Blue Book. The Blue Book is a good source of general information including demographic, political, and legislative information. Most large libraries should contain a fairly complete collection.

1.3.3 Demographic Data Sources

Sources for any demographic data required for an environmental report include the Planning Analysis and Data Section of the Division of Planning and Budget located in Room 901 of the Hill Farms Transportation Building and the Demographic Services Center of the Wisconsin Department of Administration located in the GEF-I State Office Building in Madison.

These sources also have specific reports generated by the Census Bureau which may provide additional information for socio-economic impact analysis. These include "General Social and Economic Characteristics," "General Population Characteristics" and "Detailed Housing Characteristics." All three reports cover the entire state and can supply an excellent demographic base from which to work.

Those areas of the state that are designated Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) have separate census documents prepared for them. As of the 1980 census, the SMSA's in Wisconsin are Appleton-Oshkosh, Duluth-Superior, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Janesville-Beloit, Kenosha, La Crosse, Madison, Milwaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, and Wausau.

As the census is conducted only every ten years, its information becomes progressively outdated until the population is once again recounted. Fortunately, other governmental agencies also need more timely

information and have developed techniques to estimate populations for the intermediate years.

Annually, on October 10, the Bureau of Program Management of Wisconsin's Department of Administration publishes its "Final Population Estimates." This document is statutorily required (ss. 16.96, Wisconsin Statutes) and is ". . . deemed to be the official State population estimate(s) . . ." The Statutes also say that this document ". . . shall be used for all official estimate purposes . . ." This document is used in computing the various "shared taxes formulae" and primarily indicates estimated changes in the population between census years for the state, its counties and municipalities. It does not offer other demographic information. However, it does indicate where population changes are taking place and to what degree. If population changes are not significant, it can be assumed that most of the other demographic characteristics have not changed to any significant degree.

Another useful source of information is maintained by the Department of Rural Sociology of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the UW-Extension. The Applied Population Laboratory maintains basic population and housing data from the 1980 census, including economic data on income, poverty, and the labor force. Also included in this data base are tables on personal income by source, employment and unemployment, population projections from 1980 to 2010, and data on births and deaths. Other types of primary socio-economic data are also available. The Applied Population Laboratory data base can be tailored to any study area made up of counties, cities, villages, and towns for any combination of data tables (some are limited to county coverage) for a fee.

In addition to federal or state census figures and estimates, some local communities, counties, and regional planning agencies develop additional demographic materials to meet their particular localized needs. These agencies should be contacted, as appropriate, to determine what materials exist and how they can contribute to the analysis being conducted.

1.3.4 Economic Data Sources

A number of sources of economic information exist. Those that reflect the community being profiled should be used. While much can be obtained from census documents, other sources should be used as well. For example, in rural or rural oriented communities, agricultural statistics are appropriate, and in urban or industrial areas, labor statistics reveal much about the current economy. A wealth of economic statistics is generated each year by federal, state, and local governmental agencies. Most of the agencies will provide these statistics upon request and many are contained in the WisDOT Division of Planning and Budget Library located in the Central Office in Madison.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census conducts several special censuses designed to provide economic information. These include the Census of Retail Trade, Census of Agriculture, and County Business Patterns, among others.

The Wisconsin Job Service maintains unemployment information by state, county, and, in the case of communities with more than 50,000 in population, city. This information can be of great use in determining the employment effects of a proposed project on an area as described in greater detail earlier in this chapter.

Another useful source of economic data available from some communities is the Overall Economic Development Plan. This document is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for communities participating in the entitlement portion of the Community Development Block Grant program and can provide good base information on local economic conditions.

Finally, there could be several local sources of economic data in a community. The city, county, or regional planning agency may have developed its own set of economic data which can be used as part of the environmental analysis. In addition, local real estate brokers or developers, or financial institutions, may have information of use.

1.3.5 Other Data Sources

In addition to economic information, other sources can also provide pertinent information for developing a background profile. The number of children attending a school system, as well as information about that system, can be obtained from the local superintendent. Information about a particular school in a district can be obtained from the officials in that school. The school's transportation director can advise as to transportation issues or concerns.

Local planning reports can supply a great deal of pertinent information about a community, how it has approached problems in the past, and how it will approach them in the future. It is important to learn how the community has responded to the plan and how much of the plan has been implemented. For example, while plans illustrating the future sewer needs of a municipality indicate which area(s) are expected to experience growth over the life of the plan, it is also important to learn what, if any, sewer extensions have actually been made.

The mass media in and around a community should be monitored for indications of current local issues, values

and attitudes. Newspapers, television or radio news programs, or editorials can provide insights to local attitudes toward a proposed project and related issues. Newspaper articles can be clipped and filed, as can the transcripts or tapes from television or radio programs. Other information sources such as bulletin boards, kiosks, bumper stickers, and newsletters can contribute to an understanding of current values and attitudes in the community.

1.4 Estimates and Projections

Up to this point, the information needed for the community profile has been concerned, for the most part, with the community's past and existing conditions. By developing an historical perspective, and through the use of current information, a good level of understanding of the community can be achieved. However, the past and present are only portions of a community's profile. The future must be anticipated to predict how a proposal might affect subsequent populations and conditions or create other long-term effects.

Population projections based on known data or observations are valid extrapolations of existing conditions and are required by law under the same statute mandating population estimates (ss. 16.96, Wisconsin Statutes). The Wisconsin Population Projections are periodically prepared by and for state government with the stated purpose being ". . . to present a set of 'general utility' projections of the population of Wisconsin arranged and aggregated to service the planning and decision-making need of the state and local government agencies, the legislature, the executive office, and other users, public as well as private."

Wisconsin Population Projections presents projections for the state, various state districts (not necessarily the same as the WisDOT Regions), and the counties. Figures are not given for cities, villages, and towns. This information can be obtained from the Demographic Services Center of the Department of Administration, 101 S. Webster Street in Madison.

Other sources of population projections may exist in a community. These projections are usually prepared for local or regional planning purposes. It should be remembered that population projections merely indicate what a future population may be, given a set of criteria and assumptions. In the concluding remarks to Wisconsin Population Projections, the following statement clarifies the status of all population projections: "The reader should bear in mind that these are projections which show what would happen if certain combinations of fertility, mortality, and net migration rates were to materialize. They reflect in general what the current trends portend for the future. The task of predicting the actual course of social, economic, and demographic trends is an extremely difficult one."

FDM 25-10-5 Development of a Community Profile

February 15, 1988

5.1 Introduction

Because transportation projects can affect the socio-economic environment of a community in a variety of ways, it is necessary to understand a community's past, present, and near-term future and to develop a base line of data against which to measure the socio-economic impacts of a project. After this base line, or profile, of the community has been developed and digested, predictions can be made as to the probable impacts of a proposed action on the near and longer term future socio-economic conditions of the community or project area.

5.2 Objectives

The objective of a community profile is to obtain qualitative and, where possible, quantitative descriptions of the socio-economic environment of a project area. A project area can be made up of a part of a municipality i.e., a neighborhood or commercial district), an entire municipality or group of municipalities, or a rural area. The profile provides basic information about a community's size, demographic characteristics, economy, and projected trends.

A community profile is developed with information acquired throughout the facilities development process and compiled with a view to the indicators described in each of the impact categories. This information should be noted, used, and filed in a manner so that it can be used with its corresponding impact category. A discussion on the use of the community profile is found in [FDM 25-15-1](#).

5.3 Levels of Detail

The information needed for a community profile can be gathered at three levels of detail:

5.3.1 Level I -Minimal Detail

This approach is characterized by heavy use of census data at the tract scale or larger. It relies on prior reports or studies to determine community boundaries and other major characteristics. Direct data collection includes some citizen participation procedures (e.g. meetings, workshops) plus field reconnaissance and mapping of land uses and facility locations and types.

5.3.2 Level II -Moderate Detail

This approach uses all of the above information but also adds, as appropriate, primary data including, for example, block level statistics; building permits or utility company data that go beyond census levels of detail, but could stop short of public opinion surveys. The approach is usually characterized by the use of relatively active citizen participation procedures in order to supplement statistical data with local attitudes, values, and preferences.

5.3.3 Level III -Maximum Detail

This approach would supplement the above procedures with direct surveys and interview techniques in order to collect primary data involving attitudes, values, needs, and preferences of community residents. Alternatively, similar analysis could be accomplished through use of participant observer techniques.

These levels of detail can be combined in any fashion, depending upon the needs of an individual project.

5.4 Contents

Development of a community profile begins with a description of the project area to be studied. Depending on the location, size, and complexity of the proposal, the second step is the expansion of this immediate area of reference to consider other political subdivisions and/or interest groups that may experience or perceive impacts as a result of the proposal. (Note that the larger the area of reference, the more secondary data, e.g., census, historical, political, etc., available. This is important because primary data is more difficult and expensive to gather and interpret than secondary data.)

The basic data which should be part of a community profile includes the following:

1. Population totals and demographic characteristics for the project area and general area (if the project area is only part of a municipality). Included are age, sex, race, and ethnic group characteristics.
2. Economic characteristics, such as income levels, employment levels and types, property tax levels, development trends and probabilities, retail sales and the community economic base (i.e., predominantly a manufacturing community or a service center, etc.).
3. Housing characteristics, such as number, age and condition of dwellings, degree of owner occupancy, density, vacancy rates, equalized values, and degree of absentee ownership.
4. Community facilities, such as schools, churches, hospitals, police and fire service, and other public educational and recreational facilities.

The manner in which this data is incorporated in the environmental review process is discussed in [FDM 25-15-1](#).